



Clearcreek Chapel

20th Anniversary Celebration
1985-2005

Church = Love Built on Truth

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One prevalent attitude of many Christians today is similar to that of Cain's—"Am I my brother's keeper" (Genesis 4:9)? It was a way for Cain to avoid responsibility for his selfish and sinful actions.

Becoming the first man to climb Mt. Everest proved to be a dangerous adventure for Sir Edmund Hillary. After scaling the mountain Hillary lost his footing on the way down, but his Sherpa guide, Tenzing Norgay, held the line taut and kept Hillary from falling by digging his axe into the ice. Tenzing later refused special credit for saving Hillary's life by saying "Mountain climbers always help each other."

During the American Civil War the soldier's first article of faith is summed up nowhere more eloquently than in an 1865 letter from William Tecumseh Sherman to U. S. Grant: "I knew wherever I was that you thought of me, and if I got in a tight place you would come—if alive."

On this 20th Anniversary celebration of what God has done and is continuing to do through Clearcreek Chapel, I want us to focus upon one dynamic of what makes a church great in God's eyes. What is it that will continue to make Clearcreek Chapel stand out as uniquely biblical among all the faddish churches out there. The answer is Christians equipped with the Gospel of truth caring for one another. And Why? Because that's what Christians do—they always help each other!

You may have come to Clearcreek with one thing on your mind. I am here to get some good preaching and get some good music, or get some good friends. If that is the case, than your purpose for being in this church is no different than any other church. There is nothing distinctive about you. But if Clearcreek is to be a distinctive church it must be a dynamic fellowship dedicated to living out the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5) in its interpersonal relationships. Now, you may be surprised about what that really means. I would like to your mind to missile-lock on Galatians 6:1.



Fellowship Dynamics

- ▶ What is your responsibility to the people you rub shoulders with every day?
- ▶ What do you do when you realize that your friend is struggling with a sin?
- ▶ What are the dangers you must avoid when you seek to help another Christian?



Restoration of other believers is a responsibility we share as Christians. Galatians 6:1 was not just given to Elders or Christian leaders, it is given to all believers. It was given to you! That brings us to three key questions:

✓ **What is your responsibility to the people you rub shoulders with every day?**

It's clear that God defines you as having a responsibility to help another believer. But what does that mean? How do you help a fellow Christian without becoming an intrusive busybody? The Apostle Paul warns about Christians who are busybodies (2 Thessalonians 3:11; cf. 1 Timothy 5:13).

✓ **What do you do when you realize that your friend is struggling with a sin?**

Some chose to ignore it. Others will arrogantly attack that person or falsely accuse them. What are the parameters God places around this admonition so the Bible can have functional control over your relationships with other believers without falling into sin yourself? This brings us to the next question...

✓ **What are the dangers you must avoid when you seek to help another Christian?**

This is a critical question because your basic motivation of helping others is very good, but even it can become an occasion for sin in your life. The world says that as long as a person has a good motivation it doesn't matter what they do, we'll overlook their wrongs. But God says that both the motivation and the method is important to Him.



Insightful Context

- ▶ Galatians was written to believers who were being exhorted to believe a false gospel of righteousness. A gospel by the human works of the Mosaic Law.
- ▶ Human works included circumcision, laws of cleanliness and the observance of certain ceremonial days, months, seasons and years (2:3-4,12; 4:10).



Before we unpack 6:1 it will help you to understand the broader context of Paul's argument in Galatians. This will help provide you with some very helpful insight in this verse. I have my students in Hermeneutics class memorize—"A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text."

- ✓ **Galatians was written to believers who were being exhorted to believe a false gospel of righteousness. A gospel by human works of the Mosaic Law.**

They were being persuaded to replace faith with the Law. They were told God desired observance of certain aspects of the Mosaic Law in order for them to be considered righteous before Him. The emphasis of this false gospel was upon personal deeds of righteousness to please God.

- ✓ **Human works included circumcision, laws of cleanliness and the observance of certain ceremonial days, months, seasons and years (2:3-4, 12; 4:10).**

All of these human efforts to please God for personal salvation negated salvation by grace alone, through faith alone. It introduced into Christianity a performance based gospel. In this false gospel, stress was laid upon personal achievement, individual accomplishment and self-reliant competitiveness. Christianity was beginning to morph from a religion of humble forgiven sinners to self-sufficient achievers. This not only affected how a person understand becoming a Christian; it also had a huge effect upon how Christians treated one another.



Immediate Context

▶ Pleasing the Spirit means (5:17):

1. You live by faith. (5:6)
2. You love by serving. (5:13)
3. You're led by the Spirit. (5:18)



Not only had the Judaizers, who had come into the Galatian church, discredited the apostleship of Paul but they had introduced a destructive gospel of legalism. The antidote was both a clear defense of his apostleship as ordained by God and a careful explanation of the unmerited grace of Jesus Christ in salvation. Now, this has huge implications not only to how you become a Christian but also how you live as a Christian. I like what Jerry Bridges says, “Christians should preach the gospel of grace to themselves every day.” A person who lives by grace seeks to please the Spirit in everything in their life.

✓ **Pleasing the Spirit means (5:17):**

Three important principles that set the stage for 6:1...

1. You live by faith. (5:6)

When you live by faith you are doing two things. First, you live with full trust in the work of Jesus Christ who has made payment for your sin. It is a worry-free life of grace. But second, you are freed from your personal efforts to gain and maintain your salvation to practice love (see the final words of this verse). It is the type of faith that naturally expresses itself in love.

2. You love by serving. (5:13)

This new freedom in Christian living presents some dangers. Christian liberty opens the door and often lust walks through. Your liberty can easily become a license to sin or “opportunity for the flesh.” Now the way to keep this from happening is the practice of selfless love with others.

3. You're led by the Spirit. (5:18)

When you are motivated by the Spirit and not by self-exalting efforts, then you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. Because the flesh with its laws seeks to benefit itself while the Spirit seeks benefit others. It is love in practice...

Fruit of the Spirit

Joy

Peace

Longsuffering

Gentleness

Goodness

Faith

Meekness

Temperance

Love in Jubilation

Love in Repose

Love on Trial

Love in Interpersonal Kindness

Love in Action

Love in Endurance

Love at School

Love in Discipline



Immediate Context

- ▶ Pleasing the flesh means (5:26; cf. 17):
 1. You live self-satisfied (boast).
 2. You love to show off (challenge others).
 3. You are led by selfish desires (envy).



Now look at Galatians 5:26! How does this happen? Read 5:24! Nothing erodes the unity of Christian fellowship more than people who are seeking their own passions (παθήμασιν, root “that which befalls,” “emotions”) and desires (ἐπιθυμίας, passionate longings, lusts). The liberty you enjoy through the grace of Jesus Christ can quickly be replaced with a sense of self-sufficiency.

✓ **Pleasing the flesh means** (5:26; cf. 17): three things...

1. You live self-satisfied (boast).

This is a conceited person. They believe they are self-important and they are smug about their abilities and accomplishments in life. In fact they are so self-confident they brag about themselves without any good reason.

2. You love to show off (challenge others).

When you really believe your hot stuff you feel free to challenge the masses of inferior people around you. The root idea of this participle (προκαλούμενοι) means to call forth (προκαλέω). To call forth others in a challenging way. In the middle voice, as it is here, it means to provoke or irritate others (cf. verse 15). In context, you’re so proud of your self-efforts that you dare others to compare themselves to you. Then when they do and you discover, to your horror, they are more righteous than you—then your heart swells with jealousy.

3. You are led by selfish desires (envy).

You cannot stand to have anyone look better than you do. When they do you become intensely envious. Do you see how self-centered performance-oriented righteousness is. This is what the Judaizers introduced to Galatia. Instead, we are called to love others as yourself (5:14). How? This brings us to 6:1!



Practicing love through Restoration

1. **Cause:** the person must be caught in a trespass
 - a. This person has been overwhelmed!
 - b. This person is not living according to the truth!



The Apostle Paul sets up a hypothetical case study here in Galatians 6:1. Instead of seeking to please the flesh with selfish pursuits of righteousness, you seek to please the Spirit with SELF-LESS pursuits of righteousness. How? By the active practice of RESTORATION of other believers. The fundamental meaning of the word “restore” is to put a thing in its appropriate condition, to establish, set up, equip, arrange, prepare, mend (καταρτίζω). In secular Greek it is a word for setting broken bones and in the NT for mending fishing nets. Let’s look at four aspects of this RESTORATION—there is a Cause, Character, Condition and Caution to biblical restoration here in verse 1.

1. **Cause: the person must be caught in a trespass**

Caught does not mean you are snooping around and you finally catch someone in a sin. This is not establishing some new gang of spiritual bounty hunters among Christians!

a. **This person has been overwhelmed**

It means that a person has been trying to get away from the sin and you observe that it has caught up to them. It has captured them. They have been overtaken (προλαμβάνω) or were unaware of its approach and was surprised when it overwhelms them.

b. **This person is not living according to the truth**

The word used for “trespass” is a deviation of living according to what has been revealed (παράπτωμα). It can be a false step, sin or transgression. It is a word that is used in Matthew 6:15 and Ephesians 1:7 to refer to serious offenses against both God and man. Even though the verse says “**any**” trespass, the context and terms used here mean any sin that has overwhelmed a person and they can’t seem to get out. It does not mean just any sin you observe in another person.



Practicing love through Restoration

2. Character: you who are spiritual

- a. You must not be living according to the flesh!
- b. Your life should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit!



2. Character: you who are spiritual

This is **not** saying that there is such a thing as two classes of Christians who are going to heaven. One is the unspiritual perpetually carnal Christian and the other is the spiritually righteous Christian. On the contrary, given the argument of Galatians 5, it is saying that this is the person who is walking by the Spirit, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, bearing his or her own earthly burdens and resisting fleshly desires. The opposite is the person who is presently following the desires and the deeds of the flesh (see 5:19-21)

a. You must not be living according to the flesh!

If you know you have a sin problem that perpetually plagues you and you have not seen any change or godly fruit for some time, then you are not the one who should be coming alongside another believer to help restore them. God will use someone else.

b. Your life should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit!

Only when you have the other person's welfare first and foremost in your mind and not your own desires are you ready to help them. That is why the fruit (singular because they are all interconnected) begins with "love." It is the "law of Christ" in verse 2 (cf. 5:14).



Practicing love through Restoration

3. Condition: in the spirit of gentleness

- a. It does not mean weakness because its basis is love!
- b. It does mean *pleasant and kindly!*



3. Condition: in the spirit of gentleness

So, let's say you consider yourself a "spiritual" person who is qualified to help restore another believer. Paul adds a qualification. Here is one key aspect of the fruit of the spirit that is so critical in interpersonal restoration. So, what does it mean?

a. It does not mean weakness because its basis is love!

Many think that gentleness implies weakness. The opposite is truth. Gentleness is a characteristic that resists the temptation of being harsh and demanding. It enables you to correct another without being arrogant. An opinionated or judgmental person will not be gentle in their restoration. So this aspect of the fruit of the Spirit keeps a person from using the truth like a sledge hammer.

b. It does mean *pleasant and kindly!*

In the secular Greek the root of this word was used to speak of mild food, not spicy; tame animals; gentle or pleasant persons. Paul uses this word to speak of the meekness of Christ not coming from weakness because it too was based on love (2 Cor. 10:1; 1 Cor. 4:21). In 2 Timothy 2:25 Paul says that correcting an opponent in gentleness may lead to his salvation. Likewise, when you help to restore another brother or sister in Christ you must do so like an intensive care nurse—exercising extra special care with love.



Practicing love through Restoration

4. **Caution:** looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted
 - a. You are not immune to falling into sin!
 - b. Your pride could easily be your downfall!



4. **Caution: looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted**

This is a vital caution! Why? Because your flesh is so clever and deceptive.

a. **You are not immune to falling into sin!**

Paul knew that the sinful flesh was not eradicated when it was crucified. The crucifixion of the flesh meant the flesh had been finally judged by God, but the Christian would still have to deal with leftover aspects of its reign in his heart. When you go to deal with another person who is caught in any serious trespass, you must put a guard on your own desires and deeds. In counseling, we stress this with our majors and graduate students. As a counselee describes their sin it is easy to begin to relate to their struggle in your own life. Before you know it you find yourself weakening to its power. Why? Because you assumed this sin did not have any pull on you. You quickly find out you were wrong. Why did you assume this?

b. **Your pride could easily be your downfall.**

Pride is the reason. This is why verse 3 says what it does. Martin Luther use to say, "God made the world out of nothing, and as long as you are nothing He can do great things with you."

Conclusion:

Do you care enough to help another Christian who is overwhelmed with sin?

After listening to this story, my question to all of you is: Would you have made the same choice?

At a fundraising dinner for a school that serves learning disabled children, the father of one of the students delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended.

After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he offered a question: "When not interfered with by outside influences, everything nature does is done with perfection. Yet my son, Shay, cannot learn things as other children do. He cannot understand things as other children do. Where is the natural order of things in my son?"

The audience was stilled by the query. The father continued. "I believe, that when a child like Shay comes into the world, an opportunity to realize true human nature presents itself, and it comes, in the way other people treat that child."

Then he told the following story: Shay and his father had walked past a park where some boys Shay knew were playing baseball. Shay asked, "Do you think they'll let me play?"

Shay's father knew that most of the boys would not want someone like Shay on their team, but the father also understood that if his son were allowed to play, it would give him a much-needed sense of belonging.

Shay's father approached one of the boys on the field and asked if Shay could play. The boy looked around for guidance and, getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, "We're losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him in to bat in the ninth inning."

In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shay's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the top of the ninth inning, Shay put on a glove and played in the outfield. Even though no hits came his way, he was obviously ecstatic just to be in the game and on the field, grinning from ear to ear as his father waved to him from the stands.

In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shay's team scored again. Now, with two outs and the bases loaded, the potential winning run was on base and Shay was scheduled to be next at bat.

At this juncture, do they let Shay bat and give away their chance to win the game?

Surprisingly, Shay was given the bat. Everyone knew that a hit was all but impossible 'cause Shay didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, much less connect with the ball.

However, as Shay stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved in a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shay could at least be able to make contact.

The first pitch came and Shay swung clumsily and missed. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly towards Shay. As the pitch came in, Shay swung at the ball and hit a slow ground ball right back to the pitcher.

The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could have easily thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shay would have been out and that would have been the end of the game.

Instead, the pitcher took the ball and turned and threw the ball on a high arc to right field, far beyond the reach of the first baseman.

Everyone started yelling, "Shay, run to first! Run to first!" Never in his life had Shay ever made it to first base. He scampered down the baseline, wide-eyed and startled. Everyone yelled, "Run to second, run to second!"

By the time Shay rounded first base, the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second-baseman for the tag, but he understood the pitcher's intentions and intentionally threw the ball high and far over the third-baseman's head.

Shay ran toward second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases toward home.

Shay reached second base, the opposing shortstop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base, and shouted, "Run to third!" As Shay rounded third, the boys from both teams were screaming, "Shay, run home!"

Shay ran to home, stepped on the plate, and was cheered as the hero who hit the "grand slam" and won the game for his team.

"That day," said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, "the boys from both teams helped bring a piece of true love and humanity into this world."